



COVENANT NEWS

The Newsletter of the First Congregational Church of Webster Groves

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

Let Us Pray

(an excerpt from the November 8 Message of the Day)

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This month, we will remember for the four hundredth year, the relatively safe arrival at Cape Cod of the Pilgrims. Our spiritual forebears journeyed the Atlantic and began their lives anew, praying for the sake of establishing a refreshed and godly society in what for them was a new land.

For the sake of surviving their first year, they would befriend the people already living here. But before long, friends would become enemies. The colonists possessed villages and displaced their aboriginal neighbors as so many Europeans before and after them, across the world. One imagines the feelings of betrayal and resignation that must have clouded the hearts of the Wampanoags and others as the earliest Congregationalists established Plymouth and neighboring settlements. Native people, who had led lives as predictable as the seasons, with these newcomers found their existences rendered unstable with displacement and disease.

As I write this, I have little doubt how those indigenous folk must have felt. Although we are not being colonized, we do feel occupied and preoccupied. We are quite the opposite of displaced, as so many of us shelter in place, but with the combination of disease and unease, there are so many things around us rendered unstable!

Consider our historical situation. We are almost at the end of a federal election process. Between the time that will be needed for the tabulation of ballots and the genuine mistrust so common among Americans, we are seeing businesses board up their windows and doors as rumors spread of non-essential government offices being told not to open on November 4. There is tension in the air, a suspicion of either unrest or tyranny in the offing.

Such suspicions are not without warrant. These same tensions have made all too apparent the social issues that we've been kicking down the road. Protests arise to end racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia, and abuse of police powers.

Add to that tension the stress and fatigue all of us are feeling from a pandemic that seems unending. The virus itself has taken hundreds of thousands of American lives and infected millions more, let alone the millions worldwide. Additionally, people with mental illnesses or addictions crumble with the strain of care. Photo histories of seniors in assisted living residences show the steep physical decline of our most vulnerable. Students are isolated or living under a cloud, wondering, *Will I never see my classroom again?* or else, *Can school remain open?* The specter of quarantine is never out of mind.

To quote out of context John the evangelist, who was writing about early Christians' amazement with their newfound Lord, "There are also many other things, [but] if every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world could not contain the books that could be written." So it is with abundant examples of our own worried amazement.

Continued



So, as the descendants of those who four centuries ago made America unsteady, let us pray. Let us pray not as they did, if their prayers were to conquer and possess. Let us pray not our standard “thoughts and prayers” which we have so commonly expressed to those who have lost dear ones. And let us not pray for material comforts or restoration.

Let us pray for a strength that is not our own but may become our own. Let us pray for sustenance that can feed our spirits. Let us pray humbly, for confidence and assurance like those which God intends when the words, “Be not afraid,” are spoken so often in the Bible. Let us pray for unity with and dignity for ourselves and all our siblings, in a pursuit of meaning or a wealth of grace that radiates hope and promise.

Peace



A CENTURY AGO...

One of my favorite discoveries from our church’s past was this item from the October 31, 1920, worship bulletin. The Rev. Dr. Dwight Bradley was pastor at the time, new to the church and full of challenge and spunk.

We worshiped twice on Sunday, back then, morning and evening. Morning worship included a sermon, Principles and Personality, answering Peter’s question in John 6:68, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” But for the evening, Dr. Bradley pulled from his historic moment. It was the year Woman Suffrage was enacted, a Presidential election year, and it followed two years of a worldwide pandemic. Here is the promotional announcement:

8:00 P. M. EVENING SERVICE

Pre-Election Sermon by the Pastor

“The Spiritual Influenza of American Politics. What is the Cure? Harding? Cox? Debs? The Woman’s Vote? A Third Party? Or What?”

Don’t you wish they’d recorded that message! (DD)

EDEN’S SCHMIECHEN LECTURE FEATURED FORMER FIRST CHURCH MEMBER

On Oct 7, I attended Eden Seminary’s annual Schmiechen Lecture. This year’s theme was, “Together in Hope Amidst the Pandemic,” featuring especially talks and panel discussions about the effects of racism and discrimination as they arise in South Asia.

Former First Church member, Eden graduate (and newlywed) Elina Otu joined a number of other scholars, ministers, and activists from India, Sri Lanka, and her own homeland of Indonesia to consider the economic disenfranchisement, violence, and human trafficking experienced by lower class and lower caste people. Discussion focused on the importance of solidarity of people of privilege from around the world (we fit strongly into this category) with these and other afflicted groups and individuals.

View the Schmiechen lectures and panel discussions at <https://tinyurl.com/eden-lecture>

WORSHIP NOTES FOR NOVEMBER 2020

This schedule is subject to change, as need may arise.

Sunday, November 1, 10:00am (available on Zoom – bit.ly/FCCWG-Worship – or YouTube – bit.ly/FCCWG-YT). On this Feast of All Saints (and All Souls), we celebrate “together” our Virtual Communion, mark the second Sunday in our 2021 Stewardship Invitation (Margaret Gustafson reflects on the Love of Neighbor), and reprise our Stewardship Anthem, “I Will Sing of Your Love, Love, Love.” The collection for our Neighbors in Need (NIN) special offering is announced. NIN benefits “homeland” ministries of the United Church of Christ. “For All the Saints” is the hymn of the day, “Deep River” the anthem, which accompany a service featuring the lighting of memorial candles for those of the Congregation who have died in the past year. Pastor Dave Denoon brings reflections on the lives of Ken Shoulberg, Susan Hunt, Allen Boston, Marshall Brooks, Rev. Jack Newsome, and George Krewson. Roger Barnes announces. Virtual Coffee Fellowship at 11:00am on Zoom – bit.ly/JehovahJava

Sunday, November 8, 10:00 am — (Zoom or YouTube at Nov. 1 links) – This Sunday, we honor our military veterans and the the 400th anniversary of the landing at Plymouth, Massachusetts. It is the third Sunday in our Stewardship series, this morning featuring Phil Shoulberg, who reflects upon our church’s Love for Children and another rendition of “I Will Sing of Your Love, Love, Love.” The scripture of the day is “The Parable of the Foolish Bridesmaids” (Matthew 25:1-13). **Message of the Day:** “A Very Different Wedding.” Phil Shoulberg announces. Virtual Coffee Fellowship at 11:00am.

Sunday, November 15, 10:00 am — (limited reserved seating in sanctuary; live stream on YouTube only – bit.ly/FCCWG-YT) – Stewardship Consecration Sunday (dedication of pledges for 2021); John Paci expresses the invitation to commitment in 2021 with a brief reflection on Love of Creation. The scripture of the day is “The Parable of the Talents” (Matthew 25:14-30). **Message of the Day:** “Digging In.” Doug Miller announces. Virtual Coffee Fellowship at 11:00am, with Budget Meeting called to order at 11:30.

Sunday, November 22, 10:00 am — (limited reserved seating in sanctuary; live stream on YouTube) – This is Reign of Christ, the last Sunday of the Christian year. We celebrate Christ’s Reign, reading the passage usually called, “The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats” (Matthew 25:31-46). **Message of the Day:** “They’ve All Got that Side Eye.” Diane McLean announces. Virtual Coffee Fellowship at 11:00am.

Thursday, November 26, 10:00 am — (pre-recorded, available for download, Wednesday evening at YouTube or Facebook) – As is our annual custom, worship for Thanksgiving Day will be led by a Student Minister with the Pastor acting as liturgist. This year our preacher is Pastor Elston McCowan. (No Community Thanksgiving, this year.)

Sunday, November 29, 10:00 am — (limited reserved seating in sanctuary; live stream on YouTube) – Our Advent Wreath and Jesse Tree return to the sanctuary for this First Sunday of Advent. Prayers, readings, and a meditation focused on healing and hope highlight this “Blue Christmas: a ritual for a season of illness and isolation.” Jane Porchey announces. Virtual Coffee Fellowship at 11:00am.

UPDATE ON PLANS FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP IN THE SANCTUARY

NEW TARGET DATE: NOVEMBER 15

As you learned in emails earlier, the Restart Committee has decided to delay in-person worship services in the sanctuary, slightly. We are now slated to begin on Sunday, November 15, with limited seating. Those who wish to attend may reserve their seats at <https://reopen.church/r/yoXAhLEB> or you may call the church office at 314-962-0475 and leave a message.

The Committee strongly cautions those who may want to attend, especially if you are in a high-risk group.

WORSHIP WILL ALSO BE LIVE-STREAMED AT 10:00am, SUNDAYS.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING ON THE BUDGET

NOVEMBER 15 AT 11:30 AM

The Executive Ministry has assembled a proposed budget for the year 2021 and has called a Congregational Meeting to approve it, on Sunday, November 15, 2020, at 11:30am using the Zoom platform. A copy of the proposed budget and a written explanation from Treasurer Jennifer Jones were mailed to member households, in October.

All church members are requested to be (virtually) present for this meeting. For those who are attending the Virtual Coffee Fellowship that morning, all you have to do is to stay connected. Moderator Mark Edwards will call the Congregational Meeting to order at 11:30am.

For those who want to sign on at 11:30, please use the Virtual Coffee Fellowship link – <http://bit.ly/JehovahJava> – or log in to your Zoom app and use Meeting ID 975 1194 9295. Alternatively, you can join by phone, by calling 1 312 626 6799 and entering the Meeting ID 975 1194 9295.

If you have lost or mislaid your copy of the budget and would like another, you can find it online at <https://tinyurl.com/y4y6onb3>, or call the office and request a new one be sent to you. A copy will also be able to be viewed onscreen, during the Congregational Meeting.

BRIEF REPORT FROM THE RESTART COMMITTEE

“PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF ... AND EACH OTHER!”

As most of you know, we are entering a time of year where both influenza and COVID-19 are circulating in our community. Differentiating between flu and COVID based on symptoms can be difficult, and contracting both infections simultaneously is both possible and daunting. Therefore, the Restart Committee strongly recommends that everyone get the flu shot appropriate for their age group as soon as possible. In addition, please remember to wear a mask when outside your own house, maintain proper social distancing, sanitize your hands frequently, avoid touching your face, etc. Finally, if you become symptomatic (e.g., cough, fever, chills severe headache, shortness of breath or other difficulty breathing, new loss of taste or smell, severe muscle aching, new and severe weakness, abdominal pain, diarrhea, or unexplained joint pain), always assume that it is COVID and isolate accordingly, unless proven otherwise by proper testing, regardless of whether you can recall a potential exposure or not.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Doug Miller, Co-Chair of the Restart Committee at dokmille@gmail.com.

MODERATOR'S CORNER NOVEMBER 2020

The summer has passed, fall is receding, and our Church continues to do its work despite the challenges of a pandemic. The Stewardship Committee has been hard at work launching the 2020 Stewardship Campaign that is built around the theme of Three Great Loves: love of neighbor, love of children, and love of creation. This theme will be reflected upon as we conduct our pledge drive through the first two weeks of November, culminating with the ingathering of pledges on November 15. A focus is also being directed on a Renewal of Commitment for First Church by all members. It is the hope that although we have been separated by the pandemic, we will continue to commit to the important work and vibrancy of this church. A lapel pin is being distributed to be worn with pride and a symbol of our commitment. Please follow and support the Stewardship Campaign in this very critical year.

Another important action to be taken in November is the ratification of the 2021 Budget at an all-church Zoom meeting on November 15. All members should have received through the mail a copy of the proposed budget. If you haven't received one, please contact the church office for a copy. It has been a very difficult budget to put together due to the uncertainty of the pandemic. After nine months doing things differently, we must be able to project the financial impact on the coming year. All the elements of the budget were thoroughly examined, and an attempt was made to reduce the budget by as much as possible for 2021. It was also noted that the pandemic seriously hampered our income line and prevented us from being able to use a facility as an income source. Strategic Planning was hard at work examining ways to generate income through use of church when the pandemic put everything on hold. This is noted and explained in the recent letter regarding the proposed budget and the Zoom meeting on November 15. The bottom line is we are going to have to dip deeper into our endowment to meet our operating expenses. Please review the budget letter for the specific figures. This action is being taken with great reluctance, but we have no other options at this point. The Executive Ministry recognizes that this isn't the solution to our problem. It is understood that at some point we will have to return to our previous plan for developing the "Use of Church" as a viable income resource and a way to replenish our endowment.

Planning also continues to develop the in-person worship services while keeping an eye on the COVID-19 numbers. This remains a very fluid situation. The Advent season fast approaches featuring the many traditional events we look forward to, such as the Hanging of the Greens and Christmas Eve Services. The Restart Committee, Parish Life and the Professional Staff are working hard to develop a plan to provide these celebrations in a meaningful way while minimizing risk. Stay tuned for more information to come. Although the challenges remain, we will persevere! With your continued support and commitment, we will fulfill **OUR VISION** "to be a dynamic Christian community expressing God's love, hope, joy, and peace for all people."

Together in Christ,

Mark Edwards,
Moderator



November

BIRTHDAYS

Eric Breitenbach	1	Peter McHugh	15
Lynda Morrison	2	Lili Calder-Smith	17
Becky Ruder	3	Jean Kohler	17
Paul Wentzien	4	Rick Herrick	18
Ann Hunter Lauenstein	8	Carolyn Woodsmall	18
Andrea Welnick	9	Jennifer Monaco	19
Carol McCoy	10	Mark Smith	22
Carrie Herrick	11	Shirley Moore	23
Bill Moore	11	Chris von Weise	25
Jan Ver Hagen	11	Kristy Barton	27
Charley Craig	13	Patricia Schutte	27
Joseph Weyhrich	13	Joan Musbach	30

FROM THE MUSIC DIRECTOR



Hello Friends,

We are in strange times. My paternal grandmother survived the last pandemic over 100 years ago. A few weeks back I sang for a St. Louis Symphony Chorus project with a composer in Australia. The piece was called “Until We Gather Again” by Alice Chance. It had such a strong impact on me that I began to conceive a new work, inspired by the model, and I want to write a work like it but called “*When Things Are Normal Again.*” If you want to get a general feel of what that would be, go on youtube and see/hear Until We Gather Again (<https://youtu.be/8i6bfegJN5c>)

Most of you do not know that my upbringing was as a composer. I want to write this piece for First Church as a multimedia/pre-recorded/live type of piece, and I will feature your words! If you wish, please fill out the following worksheet on pages 7 & 8 in a week or so if you are comfortable doing so. Please send a copy of your answers by email or send a paper copy to the church, Attn: Leon. My aim is to have “Oikos” style Logos Readers with our choir performing it. I will have to wait to tell you exactly the configuration because I am writing it to fit with the changing needs of our situation.

Stay safe! Stay engaged!

Leon Burke
Music Director

WHEN THINGS ARE NORMAL AGAIN WORKSHEET

It feels like time is passing... (Choose one or more)

More slowly than usual More quickly than usual Normally

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

Something I never used to notice is (This could be in your home, in your life, the places you frequent, etc.):

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

When I go out for a walk, I love looking at: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

When I go out for a walk, I love listening to: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

One way I mark the time throughout the day is: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

One thing I love about my home is *(This could your home for now, wherever you're based):* _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

When we return to “normal” what will you most enjoy returning to: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

When we return to “normal” what will you miss about quarantine times: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

One thing I look forward to when we worship together “normally” in church again is: _____

Please elaborate in 25-50 words: _____

TREASURER'S REPORT

Below are the church operating results for the nine months ending September 30:

Statement of Financial Activities

	2020	2019	Budget	Change to Prior Year	Change to Budget
					Higher/(Lower) Income
Income					
Pledges and Gifts	\$ 287,027	\$ 257,417	\$ 262,500	\$ 29,611	\$ 24,527
Transfer from Endowment	90,000	90,000	136,500	-	(46,500)
Benevolence	23,934	22,953	11,250	981	12,684
Use of Space and Miscellaneous	25,290	51,921	45,461	(26,631)	(20,171)
Income					
Interest Income	13,839	16,105	10,050	(2,266)	3,789
Total Revenue	440,090	438,395	465,761	1,694	(25,671)
Expenses					(Higher)/Lower Expense
Human Resources Expense	\$ 292,448	\$ 303,343	\$ 319,148	10,895	26,700
Facilities and Finance Expense	\$ 110,931	\$ 123,007	\$ 116,850	12,076	5,918
Benevolence Expense	\$ 35,699	\$ 33,864	\$ 24,000	(1,836)	(11,699)
Christian Education Ministry Expense	\$ 1,832	\$ 2,069	\$ 3,075	237	1,243
Parish Life Ministry Expense	\$ 2,399	\$ 4,682	\$ 8,400	2,283	6,001
Executive Ministry Expense	\$ 124	\$ 2,562	\$ 5,400	2,438	5,276
Total Expenses	443,434	469,526	476,873	26,092	33,439
Net Increase (Decrease) in Net Assets	\$ (3,344)	\$ (31,131)	\$ (11,111)	\$ 27,787	\$ 7,767

Statement of Financial Position

	2020	2019	Variance
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 206,688	\$ 143,404	\$ 63,284
Pledges receivable	61,238	79,766	(18,528)
Property and equipment	30,259	31,849	(1,590)
Minister housing long term receivable	60,000	240,047	(180,047)
Total Assets	\$ 358,184	\$ 495,065	\$ (136,881)
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ (2,314)	\$ 2,925	\$ (5,239)
Unrestricted Designated Funds	20,152	30,314	(10,162)
Restricted funds for:			
Per the Endowment Trust	40,309	34,804	5,506
Churchyard	33,760	34,093	(333)
Kishlar/Dickens Room Maintenance	58,096	61,552	(3,456)
Temporarily restricted funds for pledges	61,238	79,766	(18,528)
Memorial Funds	83,914	74,749	9,165
Long term liabilities	122,300	241,411	(119,111)
Unrestricted Net Assets	(59,269)	(64,547)	5,277
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	\$ 358,184	\$ 495,065	\$ (136,881)

Continued

Items to note:

Pledges and Gifts income is higher year to date as compared to prior year due to timing. Pledges have been paid earlier in the year. As of September 30, the church has received 76% of total pledges. Historically, that percentage is approximately 68% - 70% with more pledges historically received in December.

On the statement of financial position, and included in cash and short term investments are the funds from a loan provided by the Paycheck Protection Program of the CARES Act. The \$62,300 loan has a two year term with 1% interest, with no penalty for early prepayment. The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP loan) was created to provide loans to help organizations keep their workforce employed during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis. The PPP loan has the potential for a portion of the loan to be forgiven if the funds were used for payroll, benefits, rent and utilities. Enterprise Bank facilitated the loan between the Small Business Administration and the church. Enterprise Bank will begin accepting forgiveness applications on October 27. The church is finalizing its initial submission for full forgiveness of the loan. The loan is showing in the line item long term liabilities. Any amount forgiven will be recorded as income.

If you have any other questions or want further detail, please let me know.

Thanks
Jennifer Jones,
Treasurer

WHERE HAS SAGE BEEN?

Have you realized that SAGE has been quite silent in recent months? SAGE has been very sage in playing it truly safe during the pandemic. And we are continuing to be sage. Since we cannot do Yankee Swap safely in the delightful, familiar format, we are going to skip it this year. This is sad, after having this event for 40 years! But plan now for 2021!

However, we ARE going to have a Christmas celebration in mid-December, on ZOOM. Please watch the weekly church eNews for details.

GLIMPSES INTO THE LIFE OF A MODERATOR: QUOTES FROM PAST MODERATORS



Most Proud Of

Maintaining a reasonable fiscal stability during a period of controversy and declining membership.

We implemented a streamlined, improved financial reporting system thanks to the efforts of Ken Musbach and Treasurer Jane Porchey. We adopted a plan of fiscally responsible budgets under the leadership of Jan Ver Hagen. The Church's Renovation 2000 bridge loan debt was retired due to Will Rath's generous bequest.

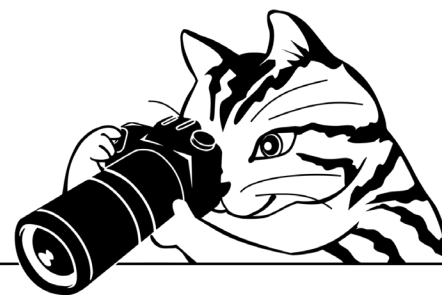
Transparency. Particularly regarding our financial position, but in all things not confidential, I believed it important to be open and offer as much information as possible.

The way the Congregation dealt with the budget crisis and the calm reasoned and democratic way the Congregation dealt with the Scouting crisis.

Kay Roush, Historian

DO YOU HAVE A TELEPHOTO LENS YOU'RE NOT USING?

If so, the audio-visual team presenting our worship services online operates an SLR camera to stream and record from behind the back pews in the sanctuary. Currently, they are borrowing a telephoto lens from a professional photographer. If you have such a lens that you would care either to donate or to loan long-term to the team, they promise that it will be gingerly and lovingly tended and used. Please, call the office at 314-962-0475, or email Debbie at Admin@FirstChurchWG.org.





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Seek Christ in each. Serve God in all.



November Meal-A-Month Shopping List

Canned Salmon or Tuna (in water)
Canned Spinach (no salt)
Applesauce (in plastic, no sugar added)
Powdered Milk, shelf stable milk, soy milk
Soap • Deodorant • Toilet Paper

Missing Someone?

Have you been missing someone for a while from worship
and other church events?

Please, let Pastor Dave Denoon or Parish Life Chair know.
Either will be happy to follow up for you.

